

## **Informed Consent in “*Ethically Impossible*” STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948**

In 2011, the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues (Bioethics Commission) issued “*Ethically Impossible*” STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948. The report is the result of its ethical analysis aimed at uncovering the activities of U.S. Public Health Service personnel during studies conducted in Guatemala involving the intentional exposure and infection of vulnerable populations with sexually transmitted diseases without their consent. The Bioethics Commission assessed the experiments conducted in the 1940s against standards of that time as well as contemporary standards and found that in both contexts the experiments involved gross ethical violations. The informed consent process, a cornerstone of ethical research, was absent from the Guatemala experiments despite the acknowledgment of it as an ethical standard at the time. There is also evidence of active deceit on the part of researchers.

For guided reading and discussion questions about informed consent in the Guatemala STD research studies, see pages **30-41** in [A Study Guide to “\*Ethically Impossible\*” STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948](#), available at [www.bioethics.gov/education](http://www.bioethics.gov/education).